



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216 at 6 p.m. on October 9, 2018.

PRC MINUTES October 9, 2018

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present: Heidi Pruess, Chair
Rick Winiker, Vice-Chair
Peter Engels, Executive Secretary
Sterling Martin
Brian Cox
Blanche Penn
Doug Burnett
Rufus Kearney
Paul Freestone
Mary Foxx Johnson
Ann Harrison

PRC Absent Tristan McMannis
John Leonard

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Chair, Heidi Pruess, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair, Heidi Pruess, welcomed all to the October 9, 2018 Park and Recreation Commission meeting. Each Commissioner introduced themselves and the region they represent and also shared information on their service on the Park and Recreation Commission. A special welcome was made to Ann Harrison, newly appointed Park and Recreation Commissioner representing the **North 1 Park Region**. Ann is retired from a career in broadcast media with WBTV.

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Public Appearance

Diane Parks came before the PRC to thank the Department and the Park and Recreation Commission for the Senior Coupon program. In addition, she expressed the need for computers and Wi-Fi at the West Charlotte Recreation Center. She also asked about the possibility of the Department providing transportation to and from the 2019 Senior Conference.

Motion was made by **Commissioner Engels** to take the technology needs expressed by Ms. Parks for the West Charlotte Recreation Center to the Central Advisory Council for discussion and to take the request for bus transportation to the Senior Citizen Advisory Council, which was seconded by **Commissioner Winiker** and approved unanimously.

Awards and Recognition: Birds of the Central Carolinas

Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, shared that the book, *Birds of the Central Carolinas* was recently awarded the National Award for Outstanding Educational Material at the 2018 Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs Annual Conference. The book was written as a report on the last two to three decades of bird research in Mecklenburg County and was authored by Department employee Don Seriff and illustrated by employee Leigh Anne Carter. The book was financially supported by the County, The Audubon Society and Partners for Parks. The PRC were offered a copy at no charge. Additional copies can be purchased from the Audubon Society or, in limited amounts, from our Nature Centers.

Standing AC Reports and Appointments

North – Blanche Penn

Commissioner Penn reported:

North Advisory Council members were sent e-mails for an opportunity to provide feedback on PRC Priorities of Land Acquisition, Community Engagement and Funding. Members were in favor of land acquisition for parks and greenways. Community Engagement included concerns for a standard policy or training for addressing homeless issues and making resource information available. Adequate Funding included discussions for the North to have the funding needed for equipment and proper staffing. Challenges included promotional opportunities for staff and the need for marketing. The North AC reports can be viewed here: [North AC Report to PRC](#) and [North AC Minutes 10-1-2018](#)

Central – Peter Engels

Commissioner Engels reported:

The Central Advisory Council did not meet in October. Budget priorities will be discussed at their November meeting for feedback to the PRC. [Central AC Report to PRC](#)

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South – Doug Burnett

Commissioner Burnett reported:

More clarification is needed on the request for budget input from the Advisory Council. The Council did have discussion around the PRC priorities. Land Acquisition: Most land purchased in the South is associated with greenway development. Other land purchases by the Department in the South were currently not known. The Council would benefit from staff providing a list of parcels purchased for Park and Recreation in addition to Greenway purchases. Adequate Funding: The Council felt the South should receive the funding necessary to adequately staff, maintain and operate the South Park Region.

Aquatics – Brian Cox

Commissioner Cox reported:

The Aquatics Advisory Council has not met but will meet prior to the November 7 PRC meeting and will have a report at that time. Commissioner Cox attended the public meeting regarding renovations at Marion Diehl. Citizens were both excited about the renovations to the pool and disappointed in the down-time when the pool will not be in use.

Athletics – Sterling Martin

Commissioner Martin reported:

The Athletics Advisory Council is in favor of purchasing as much land as possible for the future. This council is mainly interested in playing fields, coaches, volleyball, etc. Challenges included the concern for the difficulty in establishing new groups, the need for more interaction with other Advisory Councils and continued delay for repeated asks for cross-country courses. The consensus from this group regarding budget was that we never have enough money for all the wants. Suggestions included increased personnel (pre-2008) and marketing to make sure citizens know what is available. [Athletics AC Report to the PRC](#) [Athletics AC Minutes September 25, 2018](#)

Cooperative Extension – Rick Winiker

Commissioner Winiker reported:

No report. There has not been a Cooperative Extension meeting since the last PRC meeting. Commissioner Winiker said he did see many of the Cooperative Extension AC members at Open Streets 704. Chair Pruess shared that Cooperative Extension is different from the other Advisory Councils in that it is a partnership with the State and Mecklenburg County. The County provides a place of work and funds half of their staff salaries.

Golf – Mary Foxx Johnson

Commissioner Johnson reported:

No report. The next Golf Advisory Council meeting will be November 20. The annual veterans golf outing was held on October 5 at the Charles T. Meyers golf course.

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Greenways – Rick Winiker

Commissioner Winiker reported:

Motion was made by Commissioner Winiker to appoint **Jennifer Diaz and James Lee** to unexpired terms on the Greenway Advisory Council, expiring June 2019; which was seconded by Commissioner Freestone and approved unanimously.

The Greenway AC has addressed the challenges affecting the construction of greenways:

- Adequate County staffing and management is needed for land acquisition
- Purchase land even without a project in mind
- The current pace of Greenway Construction will not meet expected completion and the cost will escalate
- Continue to work for easements such as the proposed easement to connect the Eastway Regional Recreation Center to a park in return for easement naming rights.
- The following resolutions were drafted and approved from the Greenway Advisory Council. [Greenway AC Resolution – January 2018](#) [Green AC Resolution Re GW Priorities – October 2018](#)

Sr. Citizens – Tristan McMannis

Commissioner Engels, in the absence of Commissioner McMannis, made the following motion:

Motion was made by Commissioner Engels to appoint **D’Lane Fries** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2019, on the Senior Citizen Advisory Council as the DSS agency representative. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winiker and approved unanimously.

Stewardship – Heidi Pruess

Commissioner Pruess reported:

The Stewardship Advisory Council is considering budget recommendations based on changes they would make if funding remains the same and recommendations if there is an increase in the budget. Land acquisition and appropriate staffing were their main concerns. They have inquired of staff how staffing needs are calculated. More feedback details can be viewed here: [Stewardship AC Report to the PRC](#) [Stewardship AC Minutes of September 12, 2018](#)

Discussion included the following:

It was felt that as the general theme from Advisory Councils continues to be “more”, the PRC need to be prepared to explain “why more” to the BOCC.

Feedback is positive from Advisory Council members on the new agenda format and the opportunity for more interaction between PRC and AC’s. PRC were encouraged to continue asking advisory council members what is working well, what are the challenges and how can the PRC help.

Advisory Council members are interested in the cost associated with the different budget “buckets” such as land acquisition, programming or the cost associated with a playground to

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aid in advocacy.

Chair Pruess will provide a summary of budget feedback from the advisory councils at the November 7 PRC meeting.

PRC Chair Report

Chair Heidi Pruess reported on the following:

PRC Annual Report to the BOCC: Following the November 7 PRC meeting to be held at 4 p.m. in room 280 of the Government Center, the PRC will attend the BOCC meeting to present the annual report to the BOCC. This report will include a PowerPoint presentation and will be presented by Commissioners Pruess, Winiker and Engels. A handout was provided of the basic information that will be covered in the annual report and includes:

- PRC purpose
- Who we are
- Feedback from our AC's
- 2018 Impacts
- What the PRC is looking for in the coming year

This handout can be viewed here: [2018 PRC Annual Report Notes](#)

Advisory Council members are invited to attend, and many will be present for the Annual Report. PRC were asked to provide the executive team with any additional thoughts on what to include in the annual report.

Discussion included the following:

- Thank and make sure the BOCC feel part of our efforts, such as the completion of the 2008 bond projects.
- Include the importance of marketing Park and Recreation and the recruiting of population for corporations in Mecklenburg County and those looking to move to the Charlotte area.
- We need to continue building the park system at an accelerated pace.
- The results of the recent Trust for Public Land survey can be used as a tool to address unmet needs.
- Need political will to build a park for the future
- The County needs to be at the table when the City/Towns are having public meetings to answer questions and provide feedback.
- Select two or three accomplishments to highlight in the annual report. (Two major regional recreation centers are in motion, opened a new swimming facility, completed the Sportsplex at Matthews)

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Director's Report

Director Lee Jones reported on the following:

Hurricane Florence Update: The Department was called upon by the Red Cross and City EMS to provide shelter. Shelter was provided at Grady Cole and Naomi Drenan. The Department also provided facility space designated as "medical". Staff is to be commended for their efforts during this time. Details can be viewed here: [Hurricane Florence Overview](#)

Sponsorship Policy: The sponsorship policy was provided in response to a concern raised by an advisory council member surrounding the use of the Lowe's logo in our parks. There were Panthers or Panthers/Lowe's partnerships for the installation of Play60 areas. The first installation at Freedom Park was a Panthers partnership. The installation of Play60 at Hornet's Nest, Reedy Creek and Revolution were a Panthers/Lowe's partnership. Renovations of the basketball courts at Latta, Tuckaseegee and Camp Greene were a Hornets/Lowe's partnership. Opportunities for public input were available as these projects were brought before the PRC and the BOCC. The policy and related documents can be viewed here: [Mecklenburg County Sponsorship Policy](#)

Land Acquisition Recap for FY13-18: In response to PRC request, a report was provided showing the total number of acres purchased for Parks, Nature Preserves or Greenways during FY13-18. A GIS public site shows land purchased but not all purchases are for Park and Recreation. AFM is looking through this GIS report for P&R purchases and a more detailed report will be provided at the November PRC meeting to show actual parcels purchased for P&R.

More questions were generated because of this discussion. The PRC will gather their questions related to land acquisition for staff response. This will assist PRC in seeing how much land has been purchased and the trends. (Note: \$6.6 million is allocated each year for land acquisition with the majority being used for P&R land purchases.)

Consent

Motion was made by Commissioner Winiker to approve all consent items, including the PRC minutes of September 11, 2018, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

- Groundbreaking Postponed: Director Lee Jones: The groundbreaking for Stephens Creek Nature Preserve has been postponed. All will be notified of the new date once it is set.
- Open Streets: Commissioner Engels and Winiker commended staff for a job well done at Open Streets 704.

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- Homeless Resources: Commissioner Martin said Anita Brown from the North Advisory Council had resource phone numbers for the homeless. This information will be provided as a handout at the November 7 PRC meeting. Another resource is 211 established by the state.
- Senior Vouchers: Commissioner Penn thanked the Department for the Senior Voucher program. She will have the application form at the next PRC/BOCC meeting.
- New PRC Orientation: Please respond to the e-mail for scheduling a New PRC Orientation.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

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